



**MINUTES OF THE SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL AREA
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEATAC)
MEETING OF 12 July 2010**

(Minutes approved on August 23, 2010. Michael Long moved for approval and Ty Garrison seconded the motion.)

PERSONS IN ATTENDANCE:

SEATAC MEMBERS

Dr. Jonathan Baskin (absent)
Dan Cooper
Ty Garrison
Michael Long
Dr. Thomas Scott (via teleconference)
Dr. Cheryl Swift (absent)

REGIONAL PLANNING STAFF

Dr. Shirley Imsand (SEATAC coordinator)
Steven Mar (SEATAC coordinator)
Julie Lowry (General Plan Development)
Mark Herwick (General Plan Development)

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Joan Rupert (213) 351-5126
Julie Yom (213) 351-5127

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2. **Review of Robert Hamilton's resume and application for membership on SEATAC, p.2**
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NOTE: SEATAC MEETINGS ARE INFORMAL WORKING SESSIONS. MEMBERS ARE APPOINTED VOLUNTEERS IN AN ADVISORY CAPACITY. MINUTES ARE PREPARED BY PLANNING STAFF PRIMARILY FROM NOTES. SESSIONS ARE ALSO TAPE RECORDED BUT THE TAPES ARE PRIMARILY FOR BACK-UP USE BY STAFF. VISITORS ARE ADVISED TO TAKE PROPER NOTES AND/OR RECORD THE SESSION. ISSUES NOT DISCUSSED BY SEATAC DO NOT IMPLY TACIT APPROVAL. NEW OR CLARIFIED INFORMATION PRESENTED IN SUBSEQUENT SUBMITTALS MAY RAISE NEW ISSUES AND MAY REQUIRE FURTHER ANALYSIS. MINUTES ARE GENERALLY APPROVED AT THE NEXT SEATAC MEETING. DRAFT MINUTES MAY BE REQUESTED BUT ARE SUBJECT TO REVISION.

MINUTES

AGENDA ITEMS

1. **Review of SEATAC minutes of 3 May 2010**

SEATAC minutes of 3 May 2010 were approved as amended. Michael Long moved for approval and Ty Garrison seconded the motion.

2. **Review of Robert Hamilton's resume and application for membership on SEATAC**

SEATAC expressed approval of Robert Hamilton's resume and qualifications for membership on SEATAC. He has expertise in ornithology, land use, and Coastal Zone development. Mr. Hamilton's application will be further reviewed and approved by the Section Head of Impact Analysis, Director for the Current Planning Division, and Director for the Department of Regional Planning.

3. **Review of Andrea Chatfield's resume and application to be placed on the SEATAC Certified Biologists List**

SEATAC expressed concern that Ms. Chatfield's application and sample work did not provide sufficient examples of broad-based natural history knowledge nor expertise on Los Angeles County SEA biota. The sample reports provided by Ms. Chatfield were for projects that were not located in Los Angeles County. Methodology was not what would be required for a SEATAC report. Observed biota should be identified to species or sub-species as appropriate. Unusual species, such as Least Flycatcher, should be verified. Bird survey by point count off the target area (for the wind turbines) would not be appropriate in Los Angeles County. SEATAC would have liked to have seen more demonstrated knowledge on local Los Angeles County plant and animal species and methodology appropriate for what is required in a SEATAC report. For the purposes of becoming acquainted with field design and survey and preparing SEA biota reports for Los Angeles County, SEATAC recommends that Ms. Chatfield work with an approved biologist from the County's SEATAC Certified Biologists List who will oversee field work and preparation of biota reports. Based on the application materials provided, SEATAC cannot approve Ms. Chatfield's application to be placed on the County's SEATAC Certified Biologists List at this time.

4. **Review of Wallace Erickson's resume and application to be placed on the SEATAC Certified Biologists List**

SEATAC expressed concern that Mr. Erickson's application did not demonstrate the generalized skills or broad-based natural history knowledge needed for a Los

Angeles County SEATAC Certified Biologist. Mr. Erickson's knowledge and professional background of biological statistics as demonstrated in Mr. Erickson's résumé and sample reports is not comprehensive enough to prepare biota reports for Los Angeles County SEAs. The sample reports were not similar enough to what is expected in a SEATAC report. Based on the application materials provided, SEATAC cannot approve Mr. Erickson's application to be placed on the County's SEATAC Certified Biologists List at this time. SEATAC recommends that Mr. Erickson work with an approved biologist from the County's SEATAC Certified Biologists List who will oversee field work and preparation of biota reports.

While considering Ms. Chatfield's and Mr. Erickson's applications, SEATAC had a discussion on the application process for the certified biologists list. SEATAC made a motion to review previous lists of qualifications (which members will need to provide) and develop a more formal list of qualifications for the certified biologists list.

5. Discussion of coordinating natural reserve databases of County Department of Parks and Recreation, SEA descriptions, and potential database of SEATAC materials

Notes on Discussion:

PARKS AND RECREATION DATABASE:

There is a recognized need to create a database of information that is linked to natural reserve databases of Los Angeles County's Department of Parks and Recreation and to County SEAs. Currently there is a database in preparation called "maximo," that will have GIS-based information for all kinds of County facilities and layers, but it is not yet functional. Currently it is in spreadsheet format.

Parks and Recreation would like to find a way to use online information and coordinate it with the field situation of their parks and reserves. The information sources that Parks and Recreation relies upon are from Michael Long (who is the biologist in charge of County natural Parks), environmental documents prepared on parks, and information observed in the field. There are 145 park facilities of which 8 are lapped by existing SEAs and 19 which are lapped by proposed SEAs.

SEATAC conjectures that any park with significant natural resources is probably within an SEA or proposed SEA. The reports produced for SEATAC since the late 1980s probably have the data needed for the listing of park sensitive resources. Probably any park with part of an SEA will have potential for sensitive plants and sensitive animals including nesting birds.

Geocortex is a County map system that contains layers of parcel information. Parks and Recreation has created inventories of sensitive natural resources within the Department's

parks and facilities that will be part of Geocortex. The Parks spreadsheets were filtered according to existing and proposed SEA boundaries, blue line streams, riparian/wetlands, oak woodlands, coastal sage scrubs, and sensitive plant and animal species. One layer includes trails. Other biological entities were placed on the list based on Michael Long's personal knowledge and on the CNDDDB list. The list needs to be park specific and should not include what occurs only outside of the park boundaries. Usually there is a 9-quadrant CNDDDB search for possible biological special interest habitats and species, but this needs to be revised to what could occur within the park boundaries according to existing habitats. Up to four categories of information may need to be added: vegetative habitats in the park or directly adjacent to it, sensitive species observed recently, sensitive species observed historically (more than 10 years ago), and potential sensitive species that could occur. There is a need to standardize the data research. The biota information for Parks and Recreation is located in various reports such as EIRs and other sources – the challenge is sorting through and organizing the information.

SEATAC recommends hiring a knowledgeable biologist to assist with culling the CNDDDB lists and EIR reports for what is relevant to the specific parks.

Any use of the database must recognize that there is variability in the accuracy of reports. Most locations and identifications will be accurate, but there is a possibility of including some data that is not properly reported. Also mobile animals will be reported where seen, but anywhere with appropriate habitat nearby will be a potential location for the mobile animals' occurrence.

Sensitive biota may need to be represented with pictures so that park maintenance crews and others would have an easier time identifying sensitive species and habitats. Pictures will make the database user-friendly to non-biologists. It would be ideal to have the database contain both non-technical basic data and more technical biota data. Park staff and ground maintenance personnel sometimes change, so there is a need to continually train and educate new people about sensitive biota resources.

SEA DATABASE:

Julie Lowry presented an example of a map prepared for the SEA revision analyses. It showed sensitive habitats, sensitive species, topography, and drainage with 100-ft. setback from banks. The map data will be available as shapefiles. There is a sensitive species compendium for each of the newly-proposed SEAs in the 2000 reports, but it is not tabulated as a spreadsheet. The retained original SEAs will have the old reference material.

The SEA CUP is being revised to exempt the County and other local agencies in certain operational and maintenance activities.

A series of maps depicting biological resources was produced as part of the SEA Update. It might be useful for the Parks and Recreation database.

SEATAC DATABASE:

The SEATAC document index is still in the planning stages. There is some DRP discussion and movement towards discard of the documents and no creation of an index.

One of the SEATAC members noted that documents such as EIRs are not retained by any state agency. These are supposed to be available to the public. The SEATAC documents are a valuable historical reference body, may be the only historical reference available, and are public documents. They should not be discarded.

Another SEATAC member noted that there probably are sufficient data in the SEATAC documents for identifying the sensitive resources in the County parks.

SEATAC members noted the importance of specifications on the observations recorded in the SEATAC document index. Different letters or some other form of identification should be used to indicate “Observed,” “Historical observation – greater than 10 years ago,” and “Hypothetical with Potential to occur (due to habitat).”

OTHER POSSIBLE DATA SOURCES:

The oak woodlands alliance study group prepared maps in conjunction with their report. This map may be of use to the database. The map shows where historical studies have mapped oaks in the past. This was compared to LIDAR coverage of all trees in the County in a tested area in the Santa Monica Mountains. Comparing the Cal-Veg data to the LIDAR data showed that some areas escaped mapping in the Cal-Veg data because they did not meet the criterion of the minimum mapping unit. There was an approximate 40% loss of coverage due to various mapping unit problems.

Mickey Long described a powerpoint presentation he prepared to educate maintenance personnel about sensitive habitat in Whittier Narrows. These kinds of tools might be what is needed for education. They could draw on the resources of the database for preparation. Visual aids will make the presentation more interesting and should include an element of fun in promoting recognition of the natural resources of the parks.

SEATAC suggested that such powerpoints could be presented along with the mandatory safety information presentations.

SEATAC advised that such presentations should describe the consequences of destruction of sensitive resources—the need to protect valuable natural resources from loss as well as penalty consequences such as fines that could be levied on the worker who destroys the natural resource.

JOINT DATABASE NEEDS:

Different options for database format were discussed. The end product should have a spreadsheet of sensitive species and habitats, maps, and a GIS location system. There should be a means to update the data as more EIRs and SEATAC reports are produced. SEATAC will need the specific information. Parks and Recreation will need the more general information and has additional specific needs.

SPECIFIC PARKS AND RECREATION NEEDS:

The Parks and Recreation Department needs accompanying photographic examples to aid in identifying sensitive resources. Parks and Recreation needs some type of alert to notify the user of potential sensitive species and/or habitats that may occur in a specific area. The Parks and Recreation system should show contact information for appropriate Parks and Recreation staff to assist with recognition of special resources for operations in the sensitive habitats. The database for Parks and Recreation doesn't need to place emphasis on identifying species, but needs to emphasize potential issues that may be raised due to operational activities and actions. A list of these issues should be drafted, since these are the immediate needs for the database to address.

SEATAC Recommendations:

- 1) **The same basic database would serve different needs for the Department of Parks and Recreation and for SEATAC. It should have a spreadsheet of sensitive habitats and species, maps, and integration to a GIS system.**
- 2) **SEATAC reports should be submitted with georeferenced shapefiles for the project map, vegetative habitats, and locations of sensitive species observed.**
- 3) **SEATAC documents should be indexed. They are a valuable, unique historic reference for planning.**
- 4) **The final database should include general biota information with pictures and other visuals along with technical biota data.**
- 5) **The database map should include some type of alert when there is a possibility of disturbance to sensitive species or habitats in a particular area. This alert would be accompanied with contact information to notify the appropriate Department of Parks and Recreation staff of possible biota disturbance.**
- 6) **A list of issues should be drafted that identifies potential concerns from park operational activities and actions that may affect sensitive park areas. This information will be used to inform and guide park personnel when performing maintenance and other related activities.**

OTHER MATTERS

4. **Public comment** pursuant to Section 54954.3 of the Government Code.

No public comments were made.